

QUEENSLAND ETHNOLOGICAL NOTES (2).

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(Plates VI to X and Three Text-figures.)

NATIVE DOGS.

Primitive people in many parts of the world have been known to specially prize their dogs, and to bestow on them attention and caresses reserved by less benighted folks for children. It has been observed that young girls are more often than others disposed to go beyond the recognised limits of familiarity with such pets. On account of its utility for hunting, the native dog is a possession of considerable value, and though it may be lean and mangy and have a downcast air and be repulsive generally, it beds with the best of the camp though deprived of its due share of the fruits of the chase. It has been quite a common practice for the blacks of North Queensland, not only to admit dogs to the freedom of their beds, but for the women to suckle pups,¹ and I am fortunate in being able to illustrate a concrete instance of an act which may almost seem incredible unless supported by well-authenticated and graphic testimony.* During the recent visit of the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Mr. J. W. Bleakley) to Mornington Island (Gulf of Carpentaria) he was fortunate enough to surprise a woman in the act, but as soon as Mr. Bleakley was observed the inbred shyness of the race manifested itself and the woman tried to hide the puppies—which were about a week old—under her legs, and it was only with great persuasion that she was induced to allow the animals to continue their feeding undisturbed.² This enabled Mr. Bleakley to obtain the accompanying photograph (Plate VI), to whom I am indebted for its loan.

¹ In making this statement, however, there is nevertheless just a vague possibility that the native may be aware that by prolonging the period of lactation the possibility of pregnancy is correspondingly reduced.

* [Mitchell recorded this practice in 1838 (Three Exped. Int. Eastern Australia, II., p. 341), whilst Gerard Krefft noted it in his article on the Aborigines of the Lower Murray and Darling in 1865 (Trans. Phil. Soc. N.S.W., 1866, p. 372).—EDITOR.]

² I have confirmation of this practice from Captain Malcolm Smith of the "Melbidir," E. J. Banfield, Northern Queensland, and M. J. Colelough, Northern Territory, as well as Northern and Southern Queensland.

Dogs are mainly responsible for the prevalence of hydatids. These animals sleep under the blankets with the blacks and lick their mouths and sores; frequently they also use the same drinking and food utensils.

FOLKLORE.

Blacks in their primitive state were fond of their children and allowed them to take great liberties with them without rebuff or angry word, and in shifting camp the men would hoist the youngsters on their shoulders, who would secure themselves with a good grip of the hair and would thus sit comfortably and be safe.

On one of these outings, an old man who was very fond of his grandson took him into the scrub. The day was very hot and by and by a storm arose, and the thunder and lightning became terrifying and rain fell in torrents. The old man, who had hastened a long distance, had to cross a creek which he feared would block him as he was handicapped with the boy, so he stripped some bark for a temporary shelter for the night. All night long the rain poured down, and the man, who realised that he could not swim the flooded creek and carry the boy, made up his mind to leave him in the humpy and return to the old camp for food. Having told the little chap to wait until he returned he enclosed him in the temporary shelter with bark, and put sticks against the bark to prevent it from being blown down. Having thus made all secure, the old man started off at as quick a rate as the weather permitted, and on reaching the camp had some food and, with some for the boy, set out with a mate on his second journey. But to their astonishment they could find no trace of the little humpy or the sticks or the boy. Everything had disappeared, search as they would, and though they cooed and shouted they got no reply. At last they found dangling from the limb of a tree a large chrysalis,³ and so came to the conclusion that the boy had been changed into a grub securely housed in what represented the humpy and its protective sticks.⁴

THE ORIGIN OF THE MUMGOOBURRAS.

A long time ago, one hot day, one of the yellow seed-pods⁵ growing on Prairie Creek opened and out of it came a young gin, plump of body and clear of eye. She looked around and found things pleasing to her; the season was good, the lagoons

³The chrysalis is that of the case-moth (similar to the so-called "Faggot case-moth"), *Entometa elongata* Saunders.

I believe that the Singaleso call the same kind of chrysalis by a name which means "billet of wood," and believe that the insects were once human beings who stole firewood on earth and are forced to undergo appropriate punishment in the insect world.

⁴On the authority of T. Illidge (St. Lawrence, 30 years ago).

⁵The yellow seed-pods above referred to are those of the "Cattle bush," *Pittosporum phyllirroides* Benth.



J. W. Bleakley, photo.

A YOUNG MORNINGSON ISLANDER.

Showing a somewhat abnormal growth of the breasts, apparently shared by most of the young gins on this island. The areola is so pronounced that a definite sulcus is formed separating the breast superficially into two well-defined portions.

full, and the herbage green. She took up her residence just above where the Plains homestead now stands, and finding food in plenty lived there alone. One day as she was walking along the creek she passed another kind of shrub with big seed-pods, and lo, as she passed, one of these seed-pods opened and out of it came a fine young blackfellow, whom she greeted gleefully and invited to her camp on the lagoon, and there he remained with her and they lived happily as man and wife. In due time she bore a piccaninny, and that was the beginning of the aboriginal race, or at any rate of the Mumgooburras.⁶

SUPERSTITION AND MAGIC (illustrated by specimens in the Queensland Museum collections).

Women in the upper part of the Cape York Peninsula (Pennfather River district) wear string necklaces ornamented with interwoven bird feathers and down in sign of mourning, while the old women regard them as charms and firmly believe that they are able to prevent evil spirits and sickness from approaching them (Plate VIII, fig. C). The ornamentation of the necklaces is not restricted to any particular kind of feather. We have several in which feathers from other birds, such as the mountain parrot for instance, have been used.

Similar charms are to be found in various parts of Queensland, particularly in the North and Western districts, in the shape of human hair cord,⁷ but these are mostly used to dispel pain or sickness. Such instances as have come under my notice are—(1) Human-hair twine worn by both males and females for tying round the affected parts (Q. E. 14/283, Western Queensland); (2) Similar example from Palmer River employed for all kinds of pain and sickness (Q. E. 14/279); (3) As a charm against headache on the Mitchell River⁸ (Q. E. 15/732).

In our collections we have quite a number of mourning string ornaments which have been prepared as a circlet, and represent a chain and overcast variety of stringwork. Samples were procured from the following localities:—Bentineck Island (Roth), Maytown (Roth), Bathurst Head (Roth), Butcher Hill (Roth), Cardwell (1879, collector unknown); also a plain mourning string, looped and worn by women only, comes from Maytown (Roth).

⁶ I am indebted to Mr. J. R. Chisholm, Prairie Tableland, for this version of the origin of the native race, his informant being an old man who died some 35 years ago.

⁷ It is also interesting to record that similar specimens are worn by initiated men to show their social standing.

⁸ In referring to these medicinal charms, reference should here be briefly made to the emu feather charm referred to by Dr. Roth, a similar specimen of which is in our collections and was collected by him at Carandotta, and is marked as "a roll of emu feathers placed on parts affected for aches and pains." See paragraph 154, Roth, W. E., N. Q. Ethnography, No. 5, 1903.

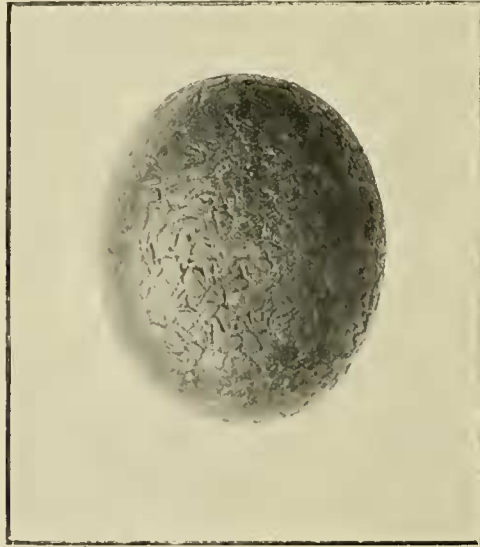
Text-figure 1.

A wooden (spatulate) charm.

Evidently connected with revenge. Q. E. 15/786. Marlborough District. Collector, T. Illidge.

The flat stick worked down to almost a thin slab has stretched along a portion of its surface pieces of human skin, which are kept in position by strips of a species of pliable cane, the whole having been daubed with white ochre, which has with use become more or less obliterated.

Text-figure 1.—A WOODEN (SPATULATE) CHARM.

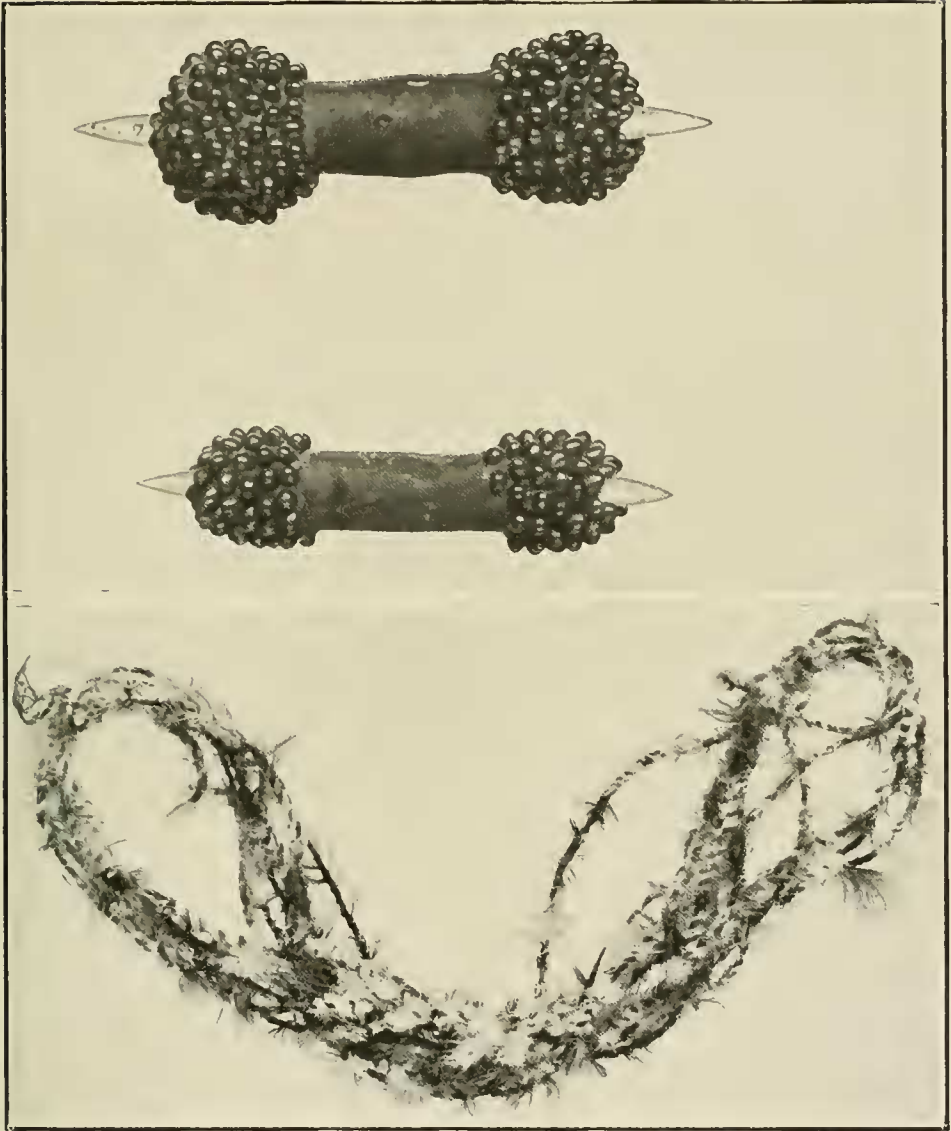


Text-figure 2.

"A BORA STONE"

Found in a grave near camping-ground, Bundaberg district (Q. E. 15/787).

The whole surface of this stone is pitted with marks which were evidently made when the clay was soft. Its circumference is $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches and its length about 3 inches.



Figs. A and B.—Two ear-ornaments worn by the dead. Fig. C.—A necklace charm.

The dumb-bell shaped ornaments with which the dead are decorated in the Cape York Peninsula are made of gum cement and provided with wallaby incisors at each end, which in their turn are surrounded at the base with the gay seeds of *Abrus precatorius* (Q.E 16/941A, and Q.E 16/972B).

The love for the necklace charm is very deep-rooted (*see text*).

